

KANCHPUR-GHATARCHAR ROUTE Pilot run pushed back to September

Says DSCC mayor; 155 buses were slated to run from April 1 under one company in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Originally scheduled for an April 1 launch, the proposed pilot to run buses under a single company on the Kanchpur Bridge-Ghatarchar route has been pushed back to September 7, said Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday.

The mayor, also chief of the Bus Route Rationalisation (BRR) committee -- formed to bring discipline to the capital's chaotic bus operations -- made the announcement after the 17th meeting of the committee held at the Nagar Bhaban.

Earlier, for the pilot, 155 buses were slated to run from April 1. The mayor said the launching date had to be pushed back due to delays caused by the coronavirus situation.

He said he and DNCC mayor Atiqul Islam has already visited Ghatarchar and selected 12 bighas of land to set up a bus depot.

Taposh said they have also taken an initiative to construct a bus-bay and passenger shed in the route.

He said they have already finalised the draft for the contract with the owners who will run the buses and prepared a guideline in this regard. The mayor said they will make the contract on July 29.

The mayor said they have another initiative to construct four bus terminals. The terminals will be constructed

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Droves of people, who had just entered Dhaka, were seen walking on the footpaths of the capital's Gabtoli yesterday. With lockdown in place in seven districts, Dhaka-going vehicles were stopped at Savar's Aminbazar area, forcing many to reach the city on foot.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Lawyer arrested for 'bail forgery'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lawyer of Dhaka judges court named Raju Ahmed Rajib has been arrested on Wednesday for allegedly making "fake anticipatory bail order" in a violence and narcotics case filed in Bogura.

The state provided the information to the HC bench of Justice Md Abu Zafar Siddique and Justice KM Hafizul Alam during hearing a suomuto (voluntary) rule.

The bench observed that if the gang of frauds involved in bail forgery cannot be caught what is the necessity of judges and lawyers.

"The frauds are making fake verdicts and orders with seals. But why are they not being nabbed? They must be brought to the book of law", the bench said.

Deputy Attorney General Samira Tarannum Rabeya told The Daily Star on Wednesday night that a resident from Bogura requested a senior Supreme Court lawyer in February

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RAMNA BATAMUL BLAST CASE

20 years in condemned cell!

Death row convict's lawyer requests to move him to normal cell, as HC again adjourns hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A death-row convict in Ramna Batamul bomb blasts case, which killed ten people at Pahela Baishakh celebrations in 2001, has been in a condemned cell for the last 20 years.

The case has been included in the High Court's hearing lists 375 times since 2014, but the benches concerned adjourned the hearing each time following the state's adjournment prayers, said Mohammad Shishir Manir, a defence lawyer for the convict, Moulana Akbar Hossain alias Helaluddin.

Yesterday, Manir prayed to the HC to grant bail to his client or to order the jail authorities to shift him to a normal cell after the HC once again adjourned till October 24 the hearing on the death reference and appeals in the case.

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The HC bench led by Justice Krishna Debnath and ASM Abdul Mobin asked lawyer Manir to submit a written application in this regard to this court.

Contacted, Manir told The Daily Star that he will submit the application to the HC next week.

There is no evidence and documents to prove charges brought against the convicted accused of the case, he said, adding that the trial court has delivered an "emotional verdict" in the case.

"My client has been suffering in a condemned cell for around 20 years although there is no evidence against him," he added.

Meanwhile, the HC bench passed the adjournment order after Deputy Attorney General Shahin Ahmed Khan sought time for hearing the matter.

BRIBERY CASE

Suspended ACC director Basir denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rejected a bail petition filed by the suspended director of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Khandaker Enamul Basir, in a case over transaction of Tk 40 lakh as bribe.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice SM Mozibur Rahman passed the order, claiming that the petition was not presented properly before it.

The bench, however, ordered the lower court concerned to finish the case's trial proceedings under relevant laws, Enamul's lawyer Zahidul Alam told The Daily Star.

He said the trial court is supposed to dispose of the case against his client in 360 days from the date of accepting it for trial.

Zahidul Alam said Enamul's lawyers requested the HC to reject the petition as the HC was reluctant to grant him bail in the case at this stage.

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Bangladesh to get fair share of vaccines

Says Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (Democrat-Texas) has assured of a fair share of Covid-19 vaccines for Bangladesh during a meeting with Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Shahidul Islam at her office in Houston.

The congresswoman promised her help in response to the ambassador's request for her support to Bangladesh's Covid-19 vaccine needs.

"She mentioned Bangladesh as an important ally of the US and that the

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'We need support to produce vaccine'

Says foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

Countries like Bangladesh that have the capability to produce vaccines should be allowed and supported in producing those, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen has said.

He made the proposal while delivering his speech at the Asia Pacific high-level conference on Belt and Road Cooperation on "Promoting Cooperation on Combating the Pandemic for Sustainable Recovery" held virtually on Wednesday night.

Wang Yi, state councillor and foreign minister of China, chaired the meeting.

Momen said Bangladesh achieved success in managing the first wave of coronavirus. "However, we are facing difficulty in the second wave due to shortage of vaccines," he said.

Despite all good intentions, their actions will go in vain if the availability, access, and distribution of necessary finance are not in place for recovery from this crisis, Momen said.

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Project for climate-vulnerable people extended by 2yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government and development partners decided to extend the Local Government Initiative on Climate Change (LoGIC) project for two more year at a virtual meeting yesterday for delivering adaptation benefits to the most vulnerable coastal people of Bangladesh.

The project, led by Local Government Division of Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives, is a joint initiative of the Bangladesh government, the European Union (EU), Sweden, UNCDF and UNDP.

The project was initiated in 2016 to deliver climate finance to the most vulnerable households and local government institutions in 72 unions of Khulna, Sunamganj, Kurigram, Bagerhat, Barguna, Patuakhali and Bhola districts.

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No headway for a decade in 30yr-old robbery case

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Even though a decade has passed, trial of a case filed over the robbery at Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) 30 years ago has not made any headway.

Only six out of 74 prosecution witnesses have given depositions before court in 10 years after charge framing in the case, according to the prosecution.

Mohsin Bhuiyan, the then Executive Engineer (Parts) of the BADC Central Store, who filed the case in May 1991, passed away on August of 2013 without providing his depositions.

Among the remaining 68 witnesses, one has died, but 67 others have not appeared before court, despite several summons, the prosecution said.

"Of the 67 prosecution witnesses, 22 are police personnel, while 29 others are employees of BADC," said the case documents.

The trial of the case is now pending at the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court-2 of Dhaka.

The court has issued several summons with non-

bailable arrest warrants against the 67 absentee witnesses, but they did not comply with multiple court orders, a staff of the concerned court said.

"The prosecution's responsibility is to inform the court for issuing summons or non-bailable arrest warrants upon the witnesses to appear before it [court] on the schedule date for depositions. But police will take initiatives to find out whereabouts of the witnesses and produce them before the court," SM Zahid Hossain, additional public prosecutor, told The Daily Star.

"If the police fail to do so, there is nothing for the court or prosecution to do," he said, adding, "Trial proceedings are being delayed as the witnesses are nowhere to be found."

The robbery took place on May 16, 1991. Around 2am, some seven to eight robbers tied up the hands, legs, mouth, and eyes of three night-guards inside the central store of BADC in the capital's Tejgaon area and looted various parts then worth Tk 10-15 lakh, according to case documents.

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A cattle trader stops his truck on Chattogram city's Firingi Bazar area yesterday, and climbs to the back of the vehicle presumably to check on the jam-packed livestock. With the Eid-ul-Azha knocking at the door, traders are making the rounds to wholesale markets far and wide across the country and stocking up for the occasion. Noakhali's Samsul Alam was taking his 19 cows, bought all the way from Cox's Bazar, to his home district in anticipation of the coming festival.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Research not on DU's mind

Gets low priority yet again in budget

DU CORRESPONDENT

Despite repeated complaints raised by different sections on Dhaka University's lack of research work, the university's newest budget still paints a bleak picture for the sector.

The Tk 631.79-crore budget for 2021-2022 fiscal was passed in DU senate yesterday with the highest allocation (31.80 percent) for salary and lowest for research (1.32 percent).

The amount allocated for research is Tk 11 crore.

Although the research sector saw a Tk 2 crore increment from last year, senate members have drew attention of the VC while passing the budget, saying it is still insufficient.

The size of this year's budget has also decreased from last year.

DU had prepared a budget of Tk 869.56 crore for 2020-21, which was the largest in the university's history.

MINI BYTES



The future of supermarkets is here, thanks to Alibaba

NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

More than 200 Freshippo supermarkets are open in China, operating as ultra-high-tech supermarkets. In these shops, blue polo clad pickers examine shelves with iPhones, scanning barcodes to find the exact brand of oranges, or spice mixes that match online orders. Items are placed in a bag, attached to the automated conveyor system, and whisked up and out to the back of the store to the delivery motorbikes.

All online orders arrive within 30 minutes of a shopper clicking "buy" within a three-kilometre radius. Conveyor belts for shopping bags, personalised food recommendations, and facial recognition payments make for a unique supermarket shopping experience which many term as 'supermarkets on steroids'.

Alibaba, the e-commerce titan, owns and operates all of them as part of its aim to lead the way in what it calls 'New Retail'. And these Freshippo supermarkets may give a roadmap for how supermarkets in the rest of the world may plan their renovation strategies as they recover from the pandemic's crucial blow on businesses.

Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma created

the term 'New Retail' over five years ago. In 2016, the first Freshippo store debuted in Shanghai. Alibaba had 64 outlets in 14 cities by 2018. Only two years after opening that first store, online grocery sales in China had increased to 32.5 per cent, with each Freshippo store receiving "tens of thousands" of orders every day, according to Guo Xulin, chief of staff at Alibaba's Freshippo Business Group. Over 60 per cent of Freshippo sales come from online.

This concept hasn't simply been tested at supermarkets. According to Xulin, there are now hi-tech convenience stores and breakfast pick-up stations scattered all over China that follow the Freshippo model.

However, Alibaba's impact on the supermarket industry is undoubtedly the most significant. As a result, several of its rivals are also following suit in transforming the industry for good. By the end of 2021, rival retailer JD plans to have 49 of its own seven fresh supermarkets operating in China with robotic shopping carts and wristbands that scan products as they are added into the basket.

For both Alibaba and JD, the pandemic has proved to be a major boost and pushed the businesses to rethink innovation, charting a course for others in the way. It seems like China and its unique brand of high-tech supermarkets might finally have some solutions up their sleeves, and for the time being, the future does not look too bad.